

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7601
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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (P A R A 1 . L I N E 8)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, GE, AU
SUBJECT: GDR-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS

REF: A. BERLIN 2427, B. VIENNA 3590

1. SUMMARY: RECENT HIGH-LEVEL VISITS BY AUSTRIAN
OFFICIALS TO THE GDR HAVE FOCUSED ATTENTION ON EAST BERLIN'S
RELATIONS WITH VIENNA. ACCORDING TO THE AUSTRIAN AMBASSA-
DOR IN EAST BERLIN, CHANCELLOR KREISKY BELIEVES HIS
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PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH EAST GERMAN LEADERS ARE AN IMPORTANT
ELEMENT IN DEVELOPING TIES AND REFLECT HIS DESIRE TO USE
THIS PROCESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO STABILITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE
IN GENERAL. DISCUSSIONS WITH MIDDLE-LEVEL AUSTRIAN
DIPLOMATS HERE SUGGEST THAT THE AUSTRIAN OFFICIAL APPROACH
IS ONE OF SLOW AND STEADY DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS, BUT
NOT OF ANY DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGHS. THESE AUSTRIAN OFFI-

CIALS HAVE CONFIRMED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN VIENNA AND EAST BERLIN ARE CONTINUING ON A BUSINESSLIKE BASIS, WITH CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND TO CONTINUING PROBLEMS OF HUMANITARIAN CASES, DIVIDED FAMILIES AND CLAIMS. END SUMMARY.

2. TWO RECENT HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIAL VISITS TO THE GDR, THAT OF AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR BRUNO KREISKY MARCH 30-APRIL 1 (REPORTED REFTELS) AND OF AN AUSTRIAN PARLAIMENTARY DELEGATION IN LATE MAY, HAVE FOCUSED ATTENTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIES BETWEEN THE GDR AND AUSTRIA. DURING A CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR WALSER SEVERAL TIMES ALLUDED TO AN INTERVIEW WHICH KREISKY GAVE TO SPEIGEL, PUBLISHED APRIL 17, AS A CLEAR EXPOSITION OF KREISKY'S THINKING ON RELATIONS WITH THE GDR. WALSER PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF KREISKY'S REMARKS ON THE APPROACH HE THOUGHT OUGHT TO BE TAKEN TOWARD THE GDR. ACCORDING TO WALSER, KREISKY FEELS THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR OTHER COUNTRIES TO TRY TO DEVELOP AND EXPAND DIRECT PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH GDR LEADERS. KREISKY BELIEVES THE GDR FEELS ISOLATED AND THAT IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF ALL PARTIES TO BREAK DOWN THIS ISOLATION. THIS WAS THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP TO EAST BERLIN.

3. IN HIS SPIEGEL INTERVIEW, KREISKY SAID THAT WHILE
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"WALLS" EXIST IN INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS, THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE HIGHER OR THIS WILL RESULT IN A KIND OF NEGATIVE FORTRESS MENTALITY ON THE OTHER SIDE. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL DEALINGS AND URGED THAT THE GDR MUST NOT BE TOTALLY ISOLATED. INSTEAD, ONE MUST MAKE THE GDR LESS RIGID.

4. KREISKY MAINTAINED A FIRM POSITION ON THE REALITY OF THE DIVISION OF GERMANY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCEPTING THIS REALITY WITHIN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING EAST-WEST RELATIONS. HE AVOIDED DIRECT CRITICISMS OF GDR POLICIES WHILE CAREFULLY MAINTAINING AUSTRIA'S ARMS-LENGTH STANCE VIS-A-VIS THE CHARACTER OF EAST EUROPEAN SOCIETIES. HE NOTED THAT MULTIPLE GERMAN STATES ARE NOT A NEW PHENOMENON. IN THIS CONTEXT HE SAID THE GDR CONVEYED SOMETHING OF THE IMPRESSION OF THE KINGDOM OF SAXONY, WITHOUT THE KING, BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONALITIES IN THE POLICIES OF THE COUNTRY. CONFIRMING THAT THE LEADERS OF THE GDR ARE DETERMINED TO BUILD A SEPARATE STATE, KREISKY SAID THAT, NEVERTHELESS, RELATIONS WITH THE FRG ARE SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL FOR THE GDR LEADERSHIP. HIS OWN APPROACH TO THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GERMAN STATES IS TO

BUILD AS MUCH PEACE AS POSSIBLE AND TO HAVE AS LITTLE MISTRUST AS POSSIBLE. KREISKY REAFFIRMED AUSTRIA'S INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATED THAT HE MAKES THE POINT OF TELLING HIS HOSTS IN THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES HE VISITS THAT AUSTRIA IS READY TO GRANT ASYLUM TO PERSONS WHO ARE SEEKING THEIR FREEDOM. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, KREISKY COMMENTED THAT HE HAD TAKEN AN INTEREST IN THE CASE OF IMPRISONED DISSIDENT GDR ECONOMIST RUDOLF BAHRO.

5. ON ITS SIDE, THE GDR WENT CONSPICUOUSLY OUT OF ITS WAY TO MAKE KREISKY'S VISIT A PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SUBSTANTIVE SUCCESS AND TO SUGGEST THAT THERE WAS A

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SUBSTANTIAL MEETING OF MINDS BETWEEN THE AUSTRIAN AND GDR LEADERS. CEREMONIAL ASPECTS OF THE TRIP WERE COVERED BY ALL GDR MEDIA IN GREAT DETAIL WITH CONSIDERABLE PRAISE FOR KREISKY
AS A STATESMAN WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE BUILDING OF DETENTE AND SECURITY IN EUROPE, AS WELL AS FOR HIS VIEWS ON

VARIOUS THIRD WORLD ISSUES INCLUDING THE MIDDLE EAST, AND FOR AUSTRIA AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN MAINTAINING PEACE IN CENTRAL EUROPE. WHILE THE COMMUNIQUE RESULTING FROM THE VISIT DID NOT CONTAIN THE KIND OF LANGUAGE ON ANTI-COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM, RACISM, ETC. WHICH IS NORMAL FOR VISITS HERE BY SOCIALIST LEADERS, AN ATTEMPT WAS CLEARLY CONFIDENTIAL

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MADE BY THE GDR TO REPRESENT ITSELF AND AUSTRIA AS BEING IN ESSENTIAL AGREEMENT ON A NUMBER OF FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES, INCLUDING DISARMAMENT, DETENTE, SECURITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE NEED FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS TO DISPUTES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD. THUS, FOR THE GDR LEADERSHIP, THIS VISIT--THE FIRST BY A WESTERN EUROPEAN LEADER--MUST BE SEEN AS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR VIEW OF THEIR OWN LEGITIMACY AS AN INDEPENDENT PLAYER ON THE WORLD SCENE, AND AS REINFORCING THIS POINT TO OBSERVERS, BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE GDR.

6. THE WEST GERMAN PRESS HAS TENDED TO ASCRIBE GREAT SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE TO THE KREISKY VISIT IN PARTICULAR AS THE FIRST VISIT OF A WEST EUROPEAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT TO THE GDR. RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH AUSTRIAN DIPLOMATS INDICATE THAT THE AUSTRIANS VIEW THEIR DEVELOPING TIES WITH THE GDR SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY. THE KREISKY VISIT IS SEEN AS SYMBOLICALLY IMPORTANT AND AS CONTRIBUTING TO DEVELOPMENTS IN ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND IN A MODERATE WAY TO THE RESOLUTION OF SOME HUMANITARIAN CASES. HOWEVER, WE ARE TOLD THAT THE AUSTRIANS DO NOT SEE THIS VISIT OR THAT OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS AS PRESAGING ANY MAJOR BREAKTHROUGHS IN POLITICAL OR CULTURAL TIES WITH THE GDR. IT HAS BEEN NOTED TO US ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS BY OUR AUSTRIAN CONTACTS THAT THE WEST GERMAN PRESS HAS A TENDENCY TO VIEW DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN VIENNA AND EAST BERLIN THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE INNER-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP, WHILE THE AUSTRIANS THEMSELVES PERCEIVE SUCH CONTACTS AS PART OF THEIR NORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH EAST EUROPEAN STATES AND NOT AS PART OF AN INTERNAL GERMANIC FAMILY DISPUTE. TO ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT CHANCELLOR KREISKY DOES NOT VIEW HIS EAST BERLIN VISIT AS THE FIRST BY A WEST EUROPEAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT TO THE GDR, BUT CONFIDENTIAL

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RATHER AS THE LAST EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRY WHICH HE HAS VISITED. THEREFORE, IN KREISKY'S VIEW, THE VISIT IS NOT SO MUCH A WATERSHED IN BILATERAL TIES AS A COMPLETION OF A

SERIES OF VISITS TO EAST EUROPEAN STATES WHICH KREISKY HAS MADE DURING HIS CHANCELLORSHIP.

7. CONCERNING THE AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION VISIT TO THE GDR, THE AUSTRIAN DCM SEES THE VISIT AS A ROUTINE EVENT IN A SERIES BEING CONDUCTED BY THE AUSTRIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND WHICH WAS NOT A RESULT OF THE KREISKY VISIT. HE NOTED THAT PLANNING FOR THE VISIT HAD BEGUN ONLY THREE WEEKS IN ADVANCE AND THAT ORGANIZATION ON THE GDR SIDE, WHICH WAS HANDLED BY THE HOSTING VOLKSKAMMER RATHER THAN BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, LEFT A GOOD DEAL TO BE DESIRED. THE TIMING OF THE VISIT PLACED IT DURING THE SED CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING, WITH THE RESULT THAT VOLKSKAMMER PRESIDENT SINDERMANN COULD NOT SEE THE DELEGATION DURING THE FIRST DAY OF ITS VISIT. HOWEVER, SINDERMANN WAS THE ONLY POLITBURO MEMBER WHOM THE DELEGATION MET AND EVIDENTLY MADE A FAVORABLE IMPRESSION ON THE DELEGATION MEMBERS. THE DELEGATION ALSO MET REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOUR SMALLER BLOC PARTIES IN THE GDR, EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE AT LEARNING OF THEIR EXISTENCE BUT WERE EVIDENTLY DISSATISFIED IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO DISCOVER EXACTLY WHAT FUNCTIONS THE SMALLER PARTIES PERFORM IN THE GDR.

8. SHORTLY AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY VISIT, THE GDR LEADERSHIP RECEIVED AUSTRIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF MUHRI WITH AN ACCOMPANYING DELEGATION FOR A FOUR-DAY WELL-PUBLICIZED VISIT. THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN HAS NO SPECIAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE VISIT BUT HAS NOTED THAT WHILE CHANCELLOR KREISKY SPOKE WITH ONLY FOUR MEMBERS OF THE SED

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POLITBURO, MUHRI SAW EIGHT.

9. OTHER POINTS MADE IN OUR CONVERSATION WITH AUSTRIAN DIPLOMATS HAVE FOCUSED ON CONTINUING DIFFICULTIES WHICH THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS EXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH HUMANITARIAN CASES, BINATIONAL MARRIAGE CASES AND CLAIMS. THE PRESENCE OF 8,000 AUSTRIAN CITIZENS IN THE GDR (4,000 WITH FULL AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP, 4,000 WITH BOTH AUSTRIAN AND GDR CITIZENSHIP) HAS PRESENTED THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT WITH A CONTINUING SERIES OF CONSULAR PROBLEMS. AT THE MOMENT, WE ARE TOLD, THERE ARE 30 OUTSTANDING HUMANITARIAN CASES. HOWEVER, AS CASES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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RESOLVED, MORE APPEAR ON THE DOCKET ON A REGULAR BASIS. PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED WITH GGDR AUTHORITIES IN ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE EMERGENCY VISITATION CASES. WE ARE ALSO TOLD THAT THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT IS GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS CONSULAR CONVENTION WITH THE GDR, WHICH CONTAINS A NATIONALITY CLAUSE, BUT THAT CLAIMS DISCUSSIONS ARE PROCEEDING VERY SLOWLY. IN SUMMARIZING THE STATE OF RELATIONS IN COMPARATIVE TERMS, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT AUSTRIAN RELATIONS WITH THE GDR ARE BETTER THAN THOSE WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA BUT NOTICEABLY MORE DIFFICULT THAN THOSE WITH HUNGARY.

10. ONE POINT WHICH HAS BEEN MADE TO US WITH SOME ASPERITY BY OUR AUSTRIAN COLLEAGUES IS THAT THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT AND PRESS CONTINUALLY TRY TO INFLUENCE AUSTRIAN RELATIONS WITH THE GDR AS PART OF THE INNER-GERMAN QUESTION. THE AUSTRIANS CLAIM THAT THEY SIMPLY DO NOT VIEW THE PROBLEM IN THESE TERMS AND DO NOT SEE THE QUESTION OF NATIONALITY AS A COMPELLING ONE FOR THEMSELVES, AS WITNESS THE INCLUSION OF A NATIONALITY CLAUSE IN THEIR CONSULAR CONVENTION AND KREISKY'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE LONG TRADITION OF MULTIPLE GERMAN SPEAKING STATES. HOWEVER, WEST GERMAN AUTHORITIES HAVE EVIDENTLY ATTEMPTED TO VIEW AUSTRIAN TIES WITH EAST

GERMANY AS PART OF AN INTERNAL GERMANIC FAMILY RELATIONSHIP, TO THE ANNOYANCE OF THE AUSTRIANS. AN EXAMPLE CITED BY THE AUSTRIAN DCM IN EAST BERLIN IS THAT THE FRG PERMANENT REPRESENTATION TO THE GDR APPROACHED THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY AT THE TIME OF THE RECENT VISIT OF THE BERLIN PHILHARMONIC TO DRESDEN WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY SHOULD UNDERTAKE INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF THIS EVENT BECAUSE OF HERBERT VON KARAJAN'S
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AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP. IT WAS THE AUSTRIAN IMPRESSION THAT BECAUSE THE PERMREP COULD NOT EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT A WEST BERLIN CULTURAL GROUP IN THE GDR, THE WEST GERMANS REGARDED IT AS PERFECTLY NATURAL FOR THE AUSTRIANS TO TAKE UP THE TASK IN THEIR PLACE, AN ASSUMPTION WHICH THE AUSTRIANS EVIDENTLY FOUND PRESUMPTIOUS. BOLEN

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